every quarter. Because there are *a priori,* or, as we should prefer calling them, constitutional principles in the mind, persons seem to imagine that they can also find out their nature *a priori,* and proceed to employ them in system-building.

On such grounds as these we reject in ethics, not *a priori* principles, but the *a priori* method of discovering them.

The historical method of inquiry has been recommended by some, as by Schleiermacher, with whom ethics is an investigation of human nature, with its forms and tendencies developing itself in history. We admit that history supplies to ethics some of its most valuable facts and illustrations: but as human action is always presented in history as a complex web, in which good and evil are mixed together, it is needful to have a test to determine which is the one and which the other. We are thus brought back to the inductive investigation of man's moral constitution as the only method of constructing a scientific ethics.

We are speaking throughout of the science of ethics. For the purposes of practical morality, it is not needful to determine the nature of ethical principles; for these principles operate spontaneously, and act best when we are not thinking of them, but are simply desiring to do what is right. So far as we need practical rules, these may best be learned from the Word of God and treatises founded upon it. But the Scriptures, their aim being practical, do not give us ethical any more than physical or metaphysical science. Doubtless the holy and heavenly morality there unfolded, and, above all, the perfect exemplar of the character of Jesus, are useful—nay, I believe, necessary means of enabling us to rise to a perfect idea of the morally good. The Bible doctrines of the atonement and of grace are needed to help ethical inquiry out of the difficulty which originates in the existence of sin—a fact very much ignored by secular moralists. Still there is a scientific basis furnished to ethics in the laws of our moral constitution. So far as it is founded on real facts, such a science cannot possibly lead to error, while it will be found to supply not a few valuable contributions to the Christian evidences. An inductive inquiry into man's moral nature proves that it is faithfully described in God's Word, and that there is a beautiful adaptation in the Gospel remedy to the wants of humanity.

SECT. IV.—INQUIRY INTO THE NATURE OF CONSCIENCE, OR THE MENTAL FACULTY OR FEELING WHICH RECOGNISES AND REVEALS THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN RIGHT AND WRONG.

We now take up the first of the four special topics which fall to be discussed in treating of God's moral government, or, in other words, we go on to inquire what is the mental state or process by which the distinction between good

and evil is discovered and manifested ?

Let us begin with taking a passing survey of the mode of the operation of the human mind when different classes of objects are presented before it. Let us first view it as acting when a proposition of a purely intellectual character is submitted to it— any of the propositions, for instance, of geometry.